

THE
METHODIST MAGAZINE.

FOR JUNE, 1818.

DIVINITY,

EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

Extracted from the new Edinburgh Encyclopædia.

(Continued from page 169.)

57. **T**HESE, and a few more particulars of the same kind, occur within the compass of a single page of the evangelical history. The circumstantial manner of the history affords a presumption in its favour, antecedent to all examination into the truth of the circumstances themselves. But it makes a strong addition to the evidence, when we find, that in all the subordinate parts of the main story, the evangelists maintain so great a consistency, with the testimony of other authors, and with all that we can collect from other sources of information, as to the manners and institutions of that period. It is difficult to conceive, in the first instance, how the inventor of a fabricated story would hazard such a number of circumstances, each of them supplying a point of comparison with other authors, and giving to the inquirer an additional chance of detecting the imposition. And it is still more difficult to believe, that truth should have been so artfully blended with falsehood in the composition of this narrative, particularly as we perceive nothing like a forced introduction of any one circumstance. There appears to be nothing out of place, nothing thrust in with the view of imparting an air of probability to the history. The circumstance upon which we bring the evangelists into comparison with profane authors, is often not intimated in a direct form, but in the form of a slight or distant allusion. There is not the most remote

appearance of its being fetched or sought for. It is brought in accidentally, and flows in the most natural and undesigned manner out of the progress of the narrative.

58. The circumstance, that none of the gospel writers are inconsistent with one another, falls better under a different branch of the argument. It is enough for our present purpose, that there is no single writer inconsistent with himself. It often happens, that falsehood carries its own refutation along with it; and that, through the artful disguises which are employed in the construction of a fabricated story, we can often detect a flaw or a contradiction, which condemns the authority of the whole narrative. Now, every single piece of the New Testament wants this mark or character of falsehood. The different parts are found to sustain, and harmonise, and flow out of each other. Each has at least the merit of being a consistent narrative. For any thing we see upon the face of it, it may be true, and a further hearing must be given before we can be justified in rejecting it as the tale of an impostor.

59. There is another mark of falsehood, which each of the gospel narratives appears to be exempted from. There is little or no parading about their own integrity. We can collect their pretensions to credit from the history itself, but we see no anxious display of these pretensions. We cannot fail to perceive the force of that argument, which is derived from the publicity of the Christian miracles, and the very minute and scrupulous examination which they had to sustain, from the rulers and official men of Judea. But this publicity, and these examinations, are simply recorded by the evangelists. There is no boastful reference to these circumstances, and no ostentatious display of the advantage which they give to the Christian argument. They bring their story forward in the shape of a direct and unencumbered narrative, and deliver themselves with that simplicity and unembarrassed confidence, which nothing but their consciousness of truth and the perfect feeling of their own strength and consistency can account for. They do not write, as if their object was to carry a point that was at all doubtful or conspicuous. It is simply to transmit to the men of other times, and of other countries, a memorial of the events which led to the establishment of the Christian religion in the world. In the prosecution of their narrative, we challenge the most refined judge of the human character to point out a single symptom of diffidence, in the truth of

their own story, or of art to cloak this diffidence from the notice of the most severe and vigilant observers. The manner of the New Testament writers does not carry in it the slightest idea of its being a put on manner. It is quite natural, quite unguarded, and free of all apprehension that their story is to meet with any discredit or contradiction from any of those numerous readers, who had it fully in their power to verify or to expose it. We see no expedient made use of to obtain or to conciliate the acquiescence of their readers. They appear to feel as if they did not need it. They deliver what they have to say in a round and unvarnished manner; nor is it in general accompanied with any of those strong asseverations, by which an impostor so often attempts to practise upon the credulity of his victims.

60. In the simple narrative of the evangelists, they betray no feeling of wonder at the extraordinary nature of the events which they record, and no consciousness that what they are announcing is to excite any wonder among their readers. This appears to us to be a very strong circumstance. Had it been the newly broached tale of an impostor, he would in all likelihood, have feigned astonishment himself, or at least have laid his account with the doubt and astonishment of those to whom it was addressed. When a person tells a wonderful story to a company who are totally unacquainted with it, he must be sensible, not merely of the surprise which is excited in the minds of the hearers, but of a corresponding sympathy in his own mind with the feelings of those who listen to him. He lays his account with the wonder, if not the incredulity, of his hearers; and this distinctly appears in the terms with which he delivers his story, and the manner in which he introduces it. It makes a wide difference, if, on the other hand, he tells the same story to a company, who have long been apprised of the chief circumstances, but who listen to him for the mere purpose of obtaining a more distinct and particular narrative. Now, in as far as we can collect from the manner of the evangelists they stand in this last predicament. They do not write as if they were imposing a novelty upon their readers. In the language of Luke, they write for the sake of giving more distinct information; and that the readers *might know the certainty of those things, wherein they had been instructed*. In the prosecution of this task, they deliver themselves with the most familiar and unembarrassed simplicity. They do not appear to anticipate the surprise of

their readers, or to be at all aware, that the marvellous nature of their story is to be any obstacle to its credit or reception in the neighbourhood. At the first performance of our Saviour's miracles, there was a strong and a widely spread sensation over the whole country. *His fame went abroad, and all people were amazed.* This is quite natural; and the circumstance of no surprise being either felt or anticipated by the evangelists, in the writing of their history, can best be accounted for by the truth of the history itself, that the experience of years had blunted the edge of novelty, and rendered miracles familiar, not only to them, but to all the people to whom they addressed themselves.

61. What appears to us a most striking internal evidence for the truth of the gospel, is that perfect unity of mind and of purpose which is ascribed to our Saviour. Had he been an impostor, he could not have foreseen all the fluctuations of his history; and yet no expression of surprise is recorded to have escaped from him. No event appears to have caught him unprepared. We see no shifting of doctrine or sentiment, with a view to accommodate to new or unexpected circumstances.—His parables and warnings to his disciples, give sufficient intimation, that he laid his account with all those events, which appeared to his unenlightened friends to be so untoward, and so unpromising. In every explanation of his objects, we see the perfect consistency of a mind, before whose prophetic eye all futurity lay open; and when the events of this futurity came round, he met them, not as chances that were unforeseen, but as certainties which he had provided for. This consistency of his views is supported through all the variations of his history, and it stands finally contrasted in the record of the evangelists, with the misconceptions, the surprises, the disappointments of his followers. The gradual progress of their minds from the splendid anticipations of earthly grandeur, to a full acquiescence in the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, throws a stronger light on the perfect unity of purpose and of conception which animated his, and which can only be accounted for by the inspiration that filled and enlivened it. It may have been possible enough to describe a self-sustained example of this contrast from an actual history before us. It is difficult, however, to conceive, how it could be sustained so well, and in a manner so apparently artless, by means of invention, and particularly when the inventors

made their own errors and their own ignorance form part of the fabrication.

62. III. There was nothing in the situation of the New Testament writers, which leads us to perceive that they had any possible inducement for publishing a falsehood.

63. We have not to allege the mere testimony of the Christian writers, for the danger to which the profession of Christianity exposed all its adherents at that period. We have the testimony of Tacitus to this effect. We have innumerable allusions, or express intimations of the same circumstance in the Roman historians. The treatment and persecutions of the Christians, makes a principal figure in the affairs of the empire ; and there is no point better established in ancient history, than that the bare circumstance of being a Christian brought many to the punishment of death, and exposed all to the danger of a suffering the most appalling and repulsive to the feelings of our nature.

64. It is not difficult to perceive why the Roman government, in its treatment of Christians, departed from its usual principles of toleration. We know it to have been their uniform practice, to allow every indulgence to the religious belief of those different countries in which they established themselves. The truth is, that such an indulgence demanded of them no exertion of moderation or principle. It was quite consonant to the spirit of Paganism. A different country worshipped different gods, but it was a general principle of Paganism, that each country had its gods to which the inhabitants of that country owed their peculiar homage and veneration. In this way there was no interference betwixt the different religions which prevailed in the world. It fell in with the policy of the Roman government to allow the fullest toleration to other religions, and it demanded no sacrifice of principle. It was even a dictate of principle with them to respect the gods of other countries, and the violation of a religion different from their own seems to have been felt, not merely as a departure from policy or justice, but to be viewed with the same sentiment of horror, which is annexed to blasphemy or sacrilege. So long as we are under Paganism, the truth of one religion does not involve in it the falsehood or rejection of another. In respecting the religion of another country, we did not abandon our own ; nor did it follow, that the inhabitants of that other country annexed any contempt or

discredit to the religion in which we had been educated. In this mutual reverence for the religion of each other, no principle was departed from, and no object of veneration abandoned. It did not involve in it the denial or relinquishment of their own gods, but only the addition of so many more gods to their catalogue.

65. In this respect, however, the Jews stood distinguished from every other people within the limits of the Roman empire. Their religious belief carried in it something more than attachment to their own system. It carried in it the contempt and detestation of every other. Yet, in spite of this circumstance, their religion was protected by the mild and equitable toleration of the Roman government. The truth is, that there was nothing in the habits or character of the Jews, which was calculated to give much disturbance to the establishments of other countries. Though they admitted converts from other nations, yet their spirit of proselytism was far from being of that active or adventurous kind, which could alarm the Roman government for the safety of any existing institutions. Their high and exclusive veneration for their own system, gave an universal disdain to the Jewish character, which was not at all inviting to foreigners; but still as it led to nothing mischievous in point of effect, it seems to have been overlooked by the Roman government, as a piece of impotent vanity.

66. But the case was widely different with the Christian system. It did not confine itself to the denial or rejection of every other system. It was for imposing its own exclusive authority over the consciences of all, and for detaching as many as it could from their allegiance to the religion of their own country. It carried on its forehead all the offensive characters of a monopoly, and not merely excited resentment by the supposed arrogance of its pretensions, but from the rapidity and extent of its innovations, spread an alarm over the whole Roman empire for the security of all its establishments. Accordingly, at the commencement of its progress, so long as it was confined to Judea, and the immediate neighbourhood, it seems to have been in perfect safety from the persecutions of the Roman government. It was at first looked upon as a mere modification of Judaism, and that the first Christians differed from the rest of their countrymen, *only in certain questions of their own superstition*. For a few years after the crucifixion of our Saviour, it seems to have ex-

cited no alarm on the part of the Roman emperors, who did not depart from their usual maxims of toleration, till they began to understand the magnitude of its pretensions, and the unlooked for success which attended them.

67. In the course of a very few years, after its first promulgation, it drew down upon it the hostility of the Roman government; and the fact is undoubted, that some of its first teachers, who announced themselves to be the companions of our Saviour, and the eye-witnesses of all the remarkable events in his history, suffered martyrdom for their adherence to the religion which they taught.

68. The disposition of the Jews to the religion of Jesus was no less hostile; and it manifested itself at a still earlier stage of the business. The causes of this hostility are obvious to all, who are in the slightest degree conversant with the history of those times. It is true that the Jews did not at all times possess the power of life and death, nor was it competent for them to bring the Christians to execution by the exercise of legal authority. Still, however, their powers of mischief were considerable. Their wishes had always a certain controul over the measures of the Roman governor; and we know that it was this controul which was the means of extorting from Pilate the unrighteous sentence, by which the very first teacher of our religion was brought to a cruel and ignominious death. We also know, that under Herod Agrippa, the power of life and death was vested in a Jewish sovereign, and that this power was actually exerted against the most distinguished Christians of that time. Add to this, that the Jews had, at all times, the power of inflicting the lesser punishments. They could whip, they could imprison. Besides all this, the Christians had to brave the frenzy of an enraged multitude; and some of them actually suffered martyrdom in the violence of the popular commotions.

69. Nothing is more evident than the utter disgrace which was annexed by the world at large to the profession of Christianity at that period. Tacitus calls it "*superstitio exitiabilis*," and accuses the Christians of enmity to mankind. By Epictetus and others, their heroism is termed obstinacy, and it was generally treated by the Roman governors as the infatuation of a miserable and despised people. There was none of that glory annexed to it which blazes around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher. That constancy, which, in another cause, would

have made them illustrious, was held to be a contemptible folly, which only exposed them to the derision and insolence of the multitude. A name and a reputation in the world might sustain the dying moments of Socrates or Regulus, but what earthly principles can account for the intrepidity of those poor and miserable outcasts, who consigned themselves to a voluntary martyrdom in the cause of their religion?

70. Having premised these observations, we offer the following alternative to the mind of every candid enquirer. The first Christians either delivered a sincere testimony, or they imposed a story upon the world which they knew to be a fabrication.

71. The persecutions to which the first Christians voluntarily exposed themselves, compel us to adopt the first part of the alternative. It is not to be conceived, that a man would resign fortune, and character, and life, in the assertion of what he knew to be a falsehood. The first Christians must have believed their story to be true; and it only remains to prove, that if they believed it to be true, it must be true indeed.

72. A voluntary martyrdom must be looked upon as the highest possible evidence which it is in the power of man to give of his sincerity. The martyrdom of Socrates has never been questioned, as an undeniable proof of the sincere devotion of his mind to the principles of that philosophy for which he suffered. The death of Archbishop Cranmer will be allowed by all, to be a decisive evidence of his sincere rejection of what he conceived to be the errors of Popery, and his thorough conviction in the truth of the opposite system. When the council of Geneva burnt Servetus, no one will question the sincerity of the latter's belief, however much he may question the truth of it. Now, in all these cases, the proof goes no further, than to establish the sincerity of the martyr's belief. It goes but a little way, indeed, in establishing the justness of it. This is a different question. A man may be mistaken, though he is sincere. His errors, if they are not seen to be such, will exercise all the influence and authority of truth over him. Martyrs have bled on the opposite sides of the question. It is impossible, then, to rest on this circumstance, as an argument for the truth of either system, but the argument is always deemed incontrovertible, in as far as it goes to establish the sincerity of each of the parties, and that both died in the firm conviction of the doctrines which they professed.

73. Now the martyrdom of the first Christians stands distinguished from all other examples by this circumstance, that it not merely proves the sincerity of the martyr's belief; but it also proves, that what he believed was true. In other cases of martyrdom, the sufferer, when he lays down his life, gives his testimony to the truth of an opinion. In the case of the Christians, when they laid down their lives, they gave their testimony to the truth of a fact, of which they affirmed themselves to be the eye and the ear witnesses. The sincerity of both testimonies is unquestionable; but it is only in the latter case, that the truth of the testimony follows as a necessary consequence of its sincerity. An opinion comes under the cognizance of the understanding, ever liable, as we all know, to error and delusion. A fact comes under the cognizance of the senses, which have ever been esteemed as infallible, when they give their testimony to such plain, and obvious, and palpable appearances, as those which make up the evangelical story. We are still at liberty to question the philosophy of Socrates, or the orthodoxy of Cranmer and Servetus; but if we were told by a Christian teacher, in the solemnity of his dying hour, and with the dreadful apparatus of martyrdom before him, that he saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead; that he conversed with him many days; that he put his hand into the print of his sides; and, in the ardour of his joyful conviction, exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God!" we should feel that there was no truth in the world, if this language and this testimony could deceive us.

(To be continued.)

OF THE METHODIST DOCTRINES.

From the London Methodist Magazine.

I HAVE lately been taking a view of the origin of Methodism; and of the manner in which it has pleased God so graciously to carry on that great work, which has proved a source of good to hundreds of thousands of precious souls; and which still continues so graciously to prevail.

When it pleased God to raise up the Rev. John Wesley, to be the founder of Methodism; he resolved, through Divine help, to make the BIBLE his only guide, in all the important doctrines

which he embraced ; and which he faithfully delivered to the people. His own language was, "I design plain truth for plain people ; therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations ; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings ; and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scriptures."

The following sentiments are also truly worthy of that great man. "I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air ; I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God, just hovering over the great gulf ; till a few moments hence I am no more seen ! I drop into an unchangeable eternity ! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way ; for this very end he came down from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book ! At any price give me the book of God ! I have it, here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone, only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book ; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read ? Does any thing appear dark and intricate ? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights. Lord is it not thy word, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' 'Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not.' Thou hast said, 'If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do, let me know thy will. I then search after, and consider parallel passages of Scripture ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remain, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God ; and then, the writings, whereby being dead, they yet speak, and what I thus learn, that I teach."

It was in the same spirit that the first Methodist preachers examined into the doctrines of the book of God. When the first Conference was held, at which was present, the Rev. John Wesley, the Rev. Charles Wesley, the Rev. John Hodges, rector of Wenvo, and several others, it is evident that they entered on the subject of Christian doctrine, in that spirit which was likely to draw down the Divine blessing on their consultations. They resolved that all things should be considered as in the immediate presence of God. That every point which was proposed

should be examined to the foundation ; and that every question which might arise, should be thoroughly debated and settled.

Having entered on their work in that blessed spirit, and with a single eye to the glory of God, we may reasonably expect, that they would be led into all truth. The truths which they thus learned, they faithfully preached. Divine power accompanied the word, thousands of persons were awakened to a sense of their guilt, and of their danger ; and being directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, as their only, but all-sufficient Saviour, they found redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of their sins ; their lives became holy and happy, and many of the first Methodists are now safely landed on the heavenly shore.

Through the peculiar providence of God, Mr. Wesley was long spared as a father to the growing societies ; and at various times, was led to write on almost every subject connected with Divinity. His Notes on the New Testament, though concise, are clear and full. His Sermons are probably unrivalled for a clear statement of Divine truth, and a practical and powerful application of that truth. His controversial pieces are on some of the most important truths of the Bible, which are defended in a masterly manner. In them truth is triumphant. His hymns, with those of his brother Charles, and a selection from some other authors, form a volume which, for real excellence, is probably the first in the English language. The whole of his works taken collectively, form a full statement of scriptural truths, properly explained, and practically applied. On the ground which was laid during his life, Methodism has continued to prosper in an extraordinary manner, and hitherto has suffered no decay. On the present system of sound doctrine and proper discipline, we have reason to expect that it will continue to prevail till the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.—Yea, till suns shall rise and set no more.

As a member of the Methodist body, I feel anxious that we may ever preserve the purity, both of our doctrine, and our discipline ; and the purport of my addressing you, especially at this time, is, to state the peculiar necessity of our continuing to abide by our former truths, and of guarding the sacred deposit, which God has committed to our care.

There are two theories that have been advanced, which appear to militate against our views of the important doctrine of *regene-*

ration, as stated in the writings of Mr. Wesley, and more especially in the Book of God.

One of these theories is, that *baptism*, when properly administered, is *regeneration*.

That the apostles were not of that opinion is evident, for when St. Peter went to Samaria, he found Simon, (generally termed Simon Magus,) among the newly formed society of Christians, who had been baptized. But so far was Peter from considering him as *regenerated*, that he said to him, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

That our Reformers did not consider *baptism* as *regeneration*, is evident from the catechism which they compiled, where they say, that "Baptism is an outward and visible sign, of an inward and spiritual grace." And that Mr. Wesley was not of that opinion is also evident from all his writings; but especially from his Sermon on the New Birth, where he says, "And, first, it follows that *baptism* is *not* the *new birth*; they are *not* one and the same thing." Again, "For what can be more plain, than that the one is an *external*, the other an *internal* work? That the one is a *visible*, the other an *invisible* thing, and, therefore, that they are wholly different from each other; the one being an *act of man*, purifying the body; the other a *change wrought by God* in the soul. So that the former, is just as distinguishable from the latter, as the soul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghost."

The other theory is, that all professing Christians are, in the same sense in which the New Testament writers use the expressions, *regenerate*, *born again*, *justified*, and *members of Christ's body*. Strange as this doctrine may appear, it has had its advocates. But if we examine into the writings of the Reformers, of Mr. Wesley, and also of those who were inspired by the Holy Ghost, we shall find that this novel theory is without foundation.

Mr. Wesley is remarkably clear on this subject. In his Sermon on the Marks of the New Birth, he says, "But it is not a barely notional, or speculative faith which is here spoken of by the apostle. It is not a bare assent to this proposition, "Jesus is the Christ," nor indeed to all the propositions contained in our Creed, or in the Old and New Testaments. It is not merely an assent to any, or all these credible things, as credible. To

say this, were to say (which who could hear?) that the devils were born of God: for they have this faith. They, trembling, believe both that Jesus is the Christ, and that all Scripture having been given by inspiration of God, is true as God is true, &c. yet, notwithstanding this faith, they are still "reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day." In his sermon "On the Way to the Kingdom," his expressions are equally strong, and equally proper. "A man may be orthodox in every point, he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them against all opposers; he may think justly concerning the incarnation of our Lord, concerning the ever blessed Trinity, and every other doctrine contained in the oracles of God; he may assent to all the three creeds, that called the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, and yet it is possible, he may have no religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or Pagan. He may be almost as orthodox as the devil, &c. and may all the while be as great a stranger as he to the religion of the heart."

I might quote scores of passages, from his writings, equally clear and express on this subject, as also from the writings of the Reformers; but let us now turn to the sacred writers.

The epistles are, (at least most of them,) directed to the particular churches in those places, which bear the name of the Epistle; of course, the apostles would direct their letters to the people of each place collectively, who were united together in the Christian society. And, in addressing each society, they would address them as called, *redeemed, regenerate, justified, and chosen*. But when we inquire into the proper meaning of those expressions, as used by the apostles themselves in their letters, we find that they cannot, and never were meant, to apply in that lax manner which some persons have lately supposed.

When we examine into the meaning of the term *justify*, or *justification*, we find that its proper meaning is, to declare just, or righteous, *i. e.* to acquit, or absolve from past offences, and accept, as just, to the reward of righteousness. But this justification always was preceded by true genuine repentance—was always received by faith in Christ, and was uniformly accompanied by peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

When they speak of *regeneration*, they always speak of it as a change which passes on the believer by the power of the Holy Ghost, whereby he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

In the conversation which our Lord had with Nicodemus, he speaks of the new birth, as a being "born from above," and as clearly distinguished from every thing carnal, and fleshly. St. John also, in the various passages in his first epistles, where he enlarges so beautifully on the Christian privilege of our being the children of God, clearly states, that such persons have passed from death unto life; that they have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, by the Spirit; and that, he that is born of God sinneth not.

So far from those terms applying to all professing Christians, indiscriminately, they can only apply, in the scriptural sense, to those persons who are changed by the power of Divine grace, and are made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Another doctrine which we are now especially called upon to support, is, the *doctrine of the Trinity*, as from the beginning believed, and maintained in the Christian church.

On this important subject I would premise, that there is one grand error, into which, it appears to me, some persons have fallen; and that is, to attempt to bring every thing to the bar of human reason; and if their reason cannot fathom the doctrine, they try to new model it, and so to form the system that it may come within their own comprehension. I allow that we are by reason to judge of the evidence in favour of the Bible as the Book of God, and also of the proper explanation of the terms used in that blessed book. But when it is proved to be a Divine revelation, we are bound to receive that revelation, though there may be mysteries in it which the human mind cannot fathom. Some years ago a celebrated Divine, who wished to comprehend the nature of our Lord, embraced the strange and unscriptural opinion, that the human soul of Christ was pre-existent; and he wrote a treatise to prove that it was the first, and the most glorious part of the creation of God. Other persons have recently revived an entirely opposite scheme, but equally unscriptural, viz. that the Lord Jesus Christ is termed the Son of God, only in reference to his human nature.

In speaking or writing respecting the deep things of God, we ought to do it with much caution. The human mind is limited with respect to its powers, and though it may comprehend much with respect to arts and sciences, and be continually advancing in knowledge and information on a variety of subjects; yet, with respect to the things of God, it becomes us to speak with deep

humility. But more especially when we attempt to define the nature of God, we must be careful not to make the reason of man the judge of that nature, for "Who by searching can find out the Almighty?" If the reason of man is to be the judge, and the definer of the nature of God, whose reason is to be the standard? The minds of men vary, and what one person may appear to prove to be the nature of the Divine Being, another may attempt to overthrow, and shew to be totally incorrect. If man is to be our guide, and mere human reason to be our standard in judging of the Divine Being, we shall be left in a chaos of confusion. In speaking thus of the reason of man, I do not mean to degrade it, or to suppose that we are not to use it even in spiritual concerns; but we should learn to know its province, and not to apply it as the rule of our faith, where the revelation of God is the only guide.

(To be concluded in our next.)

BIOGRAPHY.

From the London Methodist Magazine.

An Account of the Life, and Conversion from Heathenism to Christianity, of GEORGE NADORIS DE SILVA, SAMARA MAHA NAYEKA, late a Buddhist Priest in the Island of Ceylon.

GEORGE NADORIS, known in his priestly days by the name of Rajegooroo, or "The King's Priest, or Preceptor," was born of rather obscure parents; his father being what is called a Canggahn, or Corporal of the division of Lascorennes, or trained-bands of the Chalia cast, resident in the village Capugame, in the province of Matura.

The inhabitants of India are divided and subdivided into a number of casts or tribes. This classification seems to be rather of a political than of a religious origin, and was most likely contrived by some abetter of arbitrary power, for the purpose of disuniting the interests of society, and so preventing the operation of the emulative principle in man. The fetters of tyranny being thus once riveted on the community, they continue to be

worn and submitted to, from generation to generation, without the least discontent, or most distant idea of any alteration.

Scarcely any thing could have been contrived so friendly to the designs of an arbitrary and despotic government, as the distinction of cast. In the first place, it generally extinguishes, with very few exceptions, every thing like public spirit. A man can have no interest in noticing the oppressions of the ruling power, any more than success in resisting them, when he knows he is doomed by his birth to a certain sphere of life; and let who will govern, or by whatsoever rules of policy, he must of necessity remain in the profession of his father, and occupy the same rank in the scale of being, which was sustained by his progenitors a thousand years before.

But, even were it possible that the human mind could surmount such a bar to ambition as this, the distinction of cast effectually secures the tranquil exercise of despotic tyranny, by rendering it impossible that there should be any centre of union around which the whole community might rally in order to oppose its aggressions.

A perpetual dislike and suspicion of each other is mutual among the oriental casts. They will not even associate together in the most common duties of nature; and they are in general so jealous of each other's ascendancy, that nothing would more surely secure the opposition of one cast to any particular measure, than the idea, that it would meet the wishes of another party.

Here then is the balance of power. Being once, in some very remote age, vested in one particular tribe, and at the same time the other parts of the community disjointed by a distinction, producing inferiority, animosity, and mutual suspicion, the supreme authority, however improperly and unjustly it may be exercised, continues to be undisturbedly held, from generation to generation; the suffering parts of the society mutually contributing to the support thereof, by the mutual fear of its devolving on a rival cast.

This distinction, however, did it end in preventing political discontents and revolutionary enterprises, would be hailed as a blessing by every lover of benevolence and humanity; for those people are the most happy part of every community who are the least acquainted with the clashings of political parties, and the intrigues of restless ambition.

I have my eye this moment on thousands of humble happy Christians in England, who never knew the difference between Whig and Tory, and who never exercised their minds on the useless question of *Who is in?*—and *Who is out?* But who, under the shelter of the most excellent of monarchs, and the most incomparable of constitutions, quietly pursue the kindred paths of honest industry and fervent piety, enjoying the real blessings of this world, as well as of that which is to come.

But the distinction of cast, while it represses ambitious exertion, nips in the bud a spirit of improvement in every respect whatever. I suppose the arts of life in the present day, among the natives of India, are the same, without any addition, as they were five hundred years ago. Their system of medicine unimproved, their domestic conveniences unincreased. The clothing and furniture of each cast is fixed by law, as well as the formation and materials of their habitations, at least it is so in the interior of this island; and a deviation from the established rule, with respect to those things, how evident soever the improvement might be visible, would have cost an inferior man, under the old system, his life. We need not wonder, then, at the idleness, and carelessness, and listlessness, and neglecting ignorance, of a people so depressed and counteracted as have long been the people of this country.

In Ceylon, the distinction of cast is purely political, as it is likewise on the coast; and only prevents a religious union among the native Christians, because, from its radical principles, it is averse to union and co-operation of every kind. It is this which makes them sit in different parts of our churches, and maintain a studied distance from each other.

The little animosities and quarrels among some of our Cingalese Christians on this subject, are often a most exemplary reproach to the Christian character. Some time ago, there was a serious disturbance at a church in Palliagodda, a village not far from Colombo, because the women of an inferior cast ventured modestly to cover their naked breasts with a small calico jacket, while attending public worship! The superior cast tore the jackets from off their shoulders, and inflicted the punishment of a severe castigation upon them for their presumption! We have preached in the church many times, and know the consequence to have been, that the inferior cast were prevented from attending altogether.

At another place, called Morotto, within fourteen miles of Colombo, where we have likewise preached to large congregations, a native head-man, of an inferior cast, who was on his way to the church to be married, was grossly assaulted by a party of a higher class, and compelled to flee for shelter for himself and trembling bride, because he had presumed to place a comb in his head, which was an improvement on the fashion of his cast, as used by them a century ago.

It is not long since, that, at Calany, a village about six miles off, the body of a poor dead man was sacrilegiously torn out of his grave, because his surviving friends had exceeded the rules of his cast, in the materials in which he was buried. These cases do not excite so much interest in this country as they would in England, because it is an understood thing, that, with respect to dress, &c. every man ought to keep within the bounds of his own cast.

These are Christians ! The moral state of thousands of such Christians in this island, calls loudly for spiritual assistance. And we hope the day is speedily approaching towards its dawn, when the great and good Shepherd, who laid down his life for these poor perishing sheep, shall, by the progress of his gospel, eradicate every unloving principle from their hearts, and make them all "one fold, under one Shepherd." John x.

The two principal casts in this island, are the Vellalabs and the Chalias. There are many other distinctions besides, but these are the most prominent. It is a controverted point between them, as to which of those has had the highest origin. The Chalias are generally supposed to have descended from some foreigners who emigrated to this country from the neighbouring coast ; and the Vellalabs have, on all public occasions, the pre-eminence and precedence. There are clever, respectable, and excellent men, in both, within the circle of our acquaintance ; and, of each, who hold under government, places of great public trust, and of considerable importance.

Our new convert was, I have observed, of the Chalia cast ; and for the first few years of his life, being taken from his father's family, lived with the Maha, or principal Vidalon Moodeliar of the Mahabadde, or revenue department, where he conducted himself with great propriety, and gave many indications of an opening mind.

He afterwards lived, at his own request, with the Moodeliar Andries Mendis Wickremanayke; who, perceiving the brightness of his genius, and his ardent thirst after learning, committed him to the care of the late Walpala, Cennancy, a Buddhist priest, by whom he was instructed in the various branches of Cingalese literature, and under whom he made rapid progress in the cultivation of his understanding.

His rising and opening talents, together with his determined perseverance in leaving no means untried for the extension of his capacity, and the improvement of his mind, rendered him, while yet a youth, an object of many pleasing expectations, and of much and general admiration.

He had already fathomed the depths of learning which were within his reach in Ceylon; and being impelled by a restless ambition to excel, he made known to his friends his desire and resolution to leave the place of his nativity, and to travel into other countries, in pursuit of literature and the sciences.

At this time, the principal members of the Chalia cast viewed him as a proper person, who, by his extraordinary talents, was likely to raise the reputation of their community; and as he had attached himself to the religion of his forefathers, and was strongly inclined to the Buddhist priesthood, they resolved to procure his regular inauguration to that office, and to assist him to pursue his literary intentions; that they might have a priest of their own cast, who would surpass the Vellalahs in knowledge and attainments, if he could not equal them in their pretensions to dignity of birth.

Accordingly, a popular anxiety was aroused in his favour; and by the generous assistance of Peter de Abreu, Rajapaxe, the present Maha Moodeliar of the Mahabadde, he repaired to pursue his studies in the kingdom of Ava, a country which has long been considered the repository of Budhu knowledge.

But his Buddhist patrons were not aware that the measures which they adopted were directly calculated to defeat the end they had in view. They were not aware, that in furnishing him with such means of education, they were disqualifying him for the office which he had to perform, and raising him above the Pagan duties which he had to fulfil.

Here, however, we may discover the evident interference of Infinite Wisdom, who often baffles the deep-laid designs of short-

sighted men, and causes them to be instrumental in accomplishing measures diametrically opposed to those which they intend to produce.

In the year 1808, he left Ceylon, for the place of his desire; having under him eighteen youths, who accompanied him as pupils, with an eye to the priestly office, and with whom his plan was to colonize, on his return, in some part of Ceylon, and to establish a seminary for the education of Buddhist priests of his own cast.

On his way thither, he landed at Negapatan, and proceeding to Madras, he remained there for about five months; which interval he employed in acquiring a knowledge of the Sanscrit language, which is the parent of most, if not all, of the Oriental tongues, and the learned language of the East. Here, likewise, he became acquainted with the Malabar, which he speaks with great ease.

From Madras he went to Ava, and resided for more than two years at Amenapoora, or, *The Eternal City*. The inhabitants of that country, who are all of the Buddhist faith, have a tradition that they received their religion from Ceylon; and as they far exceed this island in the observance of the rites of Budhu, a priest from Ceylon is always considered as being a superior person, and as having something unusually sacred attached to his character.

Hence all the seminaries of public learning were open to him: and, by his address and talents, he appeared rather as a profoundly learned man, travelling for the purpose of communicating instruction, than as one who was journeying in quest of information. He made the best of this circumstance; and nothing escaped his penetrating eye. He acquainted himself with all their most valuable works; and having applied himself to the study of the Burman and Pali languages, with uncommon industry and great success, he was beheld, even by their most learned priests, as a most astonishing character. And, in consequence of the talent which he displayed, in a controversy with a superior priest of the king of Ava's household, in the royal presence, he was promoted to the dignity of Maha Mayaka, or "A man of high attainments;" and assumed the name and title of *Rajegooroo*; or, "The learned Teacher to the King."

The Rev. Mr. Chater, one of the Baptist missionaries now in Colombo, was at this time resident in that country; and he has

often assured us of the great respect which was paid to our convert by the inhabitants. Many of them made him rich presents of cloth, silks, and money, and various other valuable articles, by which he became greatly enriched, and enabled to make a more splendid appearance than the priests in general are able, or indeed permitted to assume.

He continued in Ava nearly three years, at the close of which period he returned to Ceylon, having been laden with honours and presents by the king of Ava, and being rewarded on account of his abilities and learning, by a great collection of most superbly bound books out of the royal library, by the king's express command.

On his arrival in Ceylon, he built a temple near Galle, at a village called Dadala, where likewise he erected a two-storied house, a thing unknown among the Cingalese natives, after the model of some houses which he had seen in Ava. He likewise gilded the spire of the pyramid attached to his temple, in the manner of those in the Burman country; and commenced quite a splendid establishment.

It is well known that the rules of the Buddhist priesthood, as delivered by the founder of their religion, forbid any thing like splendour or self-indulgence, or the amassing of riches in the priestly character. But I have been informed, that the head-priest of each class is not under those restrictions in this respect, by which the commonality is regulated; and hence some of them are opulent beyond conception.

If we bear this in mind, and besides, take into the account, the riches as well as honours which he acquired by his journey to Ava, as well as the ambitious willingness of his cast to support him in all that routine of external show which was calculated to give effect to his learning, and thus to raise him to an eminence, in order to elevate the community to which he belonged; we shall not wonder to find him, on his return to Ceylon, a proud, ambitious, worldly-minded man, and eagerly bent on the acquisition of honour, and the accumulation of wealth.

For the first four years after his arrival in his native island, he principally resided at his temple in the neighbourhood of Galle. He, however, made frequent excursions to different parts of the island, visiting his brethren, the Buddhist priests of his own cast, among whom he enjoyed an eminent reputation for the propriety of his conduct, and the superiority of his acquirements.

Nor was his fame confined to his own countrymen. The European gentlemen were frequently led by curiosity to examine his little estate ; and often passed the highest encomiums on the taste and judgment, as displayed in his various arrangements. His Excellency Governor Brownrigg, and the Honourable Sir Alexander Johnston, the Chief Justice, at different times honoured him with a visit, and were much gratified with the view of his temple and house, as well as of his very extensive oriental library.

On one of these visits, I have heard the Governor was much surprised and pleased to find a New Testament which he had received from brother Clough, at Galle, lying on the writing-table in his study ; and entered into a conversation with him on the subject of Christianity, through the medium of an interpreter, which I believe strongly prepossessed his Excellency in his favour.

The distribution of the New Testament in his own language, by the zealous efforts of the Colombo Bible Society, had certainly aroused his attention with respect to the Christian religion. But from all I can learn, his mind remained as firmly attached as ever to the Buddhist principles. In fact, his whole desire seemed placed on eminence in the profession which he had chosen for himself, and in which he had already met with such great success.

After his return to Ceylon, about a year or so, he applied to the Government to be confirmed in those elevations of rank to which he had been promoted in the Burman empire ; which request was granted him : and he was besides allowed to adopt some new and honorary distinctions in his equipage, which he did not feel himself authorised to assume without some sanction from our Government.

In the course of last year, (1815) he undertook another journey to Colombo, in order to obtain a grant of land in the Matura district ; which, I believe, was generously made him. But this was a memorable and momentous journey to him ; and was over-ruled by Providence to the production of a separation between himself and that line of life in which, till now, had centred all his hopes and expectations of future exaltation and aggrandisement.

While in Colombo on this business, he was noticed by several English gentlemen, who, on account of their engagements with

the interior provinces of the island, had commenced the study of the Cingalese language ; and by whom he was employed to assist them in their studies. By this means he became acquainted with the elements of the English tongue.

It was in the course of the interviews which he thus had with some of these gentlemen, that the subject of Christianity happened to be brought up ; and the consequence was, his expressing a desire to debate the question with the Rev. Mr. Bisset, who was known to him as the Governor's domestic chaplain. I have not understood that this desire proceeded from any wish to become a Christian. It appears to have arisen merely from a conviction of the superiority of his own system ; and no doubt the victory which he obtained in an argument with a domestic priest of the king of Ava's household, to which I have already referred, led him to anticipate a similar success in the present instance.

About this time one of the Honourable Members of Council favoured us with a visit for the purpose of inspecting our press, day-school, &c. at which time he happened to mention the circumstance to us ; and brother Clough and myself expressed a strong wish to have an interview with him.

In this we were shortly after gratified. Mr. Bisset was so kind as to introduce him to us by a short note, stating (what we knew to be the case) that he was too much occupied with very important business to give the priest those attentions, which, nevertheless, he strongly wished to give him ; and requesting, in consequence, that we would have some conversation with him. We replied, that we should be most happy to devote a portion of our time to that purpose.—Thus commenced our acquaintance with him.

On our first interview we were struck with something clever and superior in his appearance ; but withal we discovered him to be a man so shrewd and worldly in his views, and already so highly advanced and enriched in his Buddhist profession, that we did not conceive him to have any temptation to embrace Christianity from worldly motives ; and I gave it as my opinion to Mr. Bisset, that he would not alter his religious sentiments until he had undergone a radical change in his moral principles.

He came to our house in a fine handsomely painted palanquin, with an umbrella made of silk and ornamented, the stick of

which was nearly twelve feet in length, carried behind him.— This was the first time I had ever seen a Buddhist priest carried in a palanquin. They are, in general, pedestrians of a very humble order. The usual dress of the priest is a simple calico cloth dyed yellow, and rolled round the body ; but he was dressed in silks and satins, with a rich robe of yellow velvet covering the whole.

On account of our numerous engagements, and particularly as we were then busily employed in applying for subscriptions towards our new Colombo estate, &c. we appointed the priest to wait upon us at eleven o'clock each day ; and brother Clough and myself agreed to attend to him by turns at the appointed hour.

From my being the eldest, I suppose, I had more of his attentions than my colleague : though we each appeared to grow daily in his estimation. And he very punctually observed his hour of calling upon us ; never omitting it, without sending one of his pupils to assign the reason. On one of these occasions, I received the following note from him. The original now lies before me :—

“ DEAR SIR,

August 21, 1815.

“ I have the honour to inform you that I am no time to come you to-day ; but I hope and trust you will not be angry with me for the same ; and consequently we think that I may be able to come you next Monday.

“ I am your servant,

RAJEGOOROO.”

In answering this note, I simply directed to him as *The Ara Priest*, which was the name by which he was generally known among the Europeans. I was surprised, however, by a visit from him before the appointed time ; and ascertained the object of it was to apprise me of his titles ; and to convince me that my ideas of his rank were not sufficiently exalted, he informed me that he was “ The Chief Priest of the Amenapoorra Society.”

I apologized to him for the mistake which I had made in directing to him, and he appeared perfectly satisfied ; and I only now mention this circumstance to shew how great were his views of his own dignity and importance ; and how little encouragement he gave us to expect that he would turn his back on the fascinating charms of human praise and honour, in order

to embrace the despised yoke of Him who was meek and lowly of heart, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

The great tenacity, however, with which he held to his Buddhist principles, and the vehemence with which he was accustomed to argue in defence of them, gave us some hope that he would in time yield to the force of truth; and it was this which caused us to pay the most punctual and conscientious attention to him on all occasions.

(To be continued.)

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATED.

OBSERVATIONS ON MATTHEW X. 5. BY A LATE EMINENT DIVINE.

“It may seem strange that our Lord neither preached himself to the Gentiles, nor allowed his disciples to preach among them during his own life-time; especially when it is considered that he came into the world to destroy the polytheism of the heathens, their idol mediators, and their idolatrous worship, and to establish the knowledge of the true God, and of the only mediator between God and man, and of the right method of obtaining his favour. But our wonder will cease, when the reason of his conduct is understood. As the Jews were the only people in the world who believed in the One True God, before his messengers attempted to preach him to the heathens, it was fit that they should prove their mission to the conviction of the Jews, instruct them fully in the fundamental doctrines of religion, and correct what errors had crept into their faith. Besides, Christianity was not only to be propagated through the world, by the force of its own intrinsic excellency, and by the miracles wherewith it was accompanied; but it was to make its way also by the evidence which it derived from the Jewish prophecies, and by the light thrown upon it, considered as the perfection of that scheme which was begun in the first ages, and carried on under various dispensations from time to time, till it obtained a more complete and lasting form under the Jewish œconomy. It was highly expedient, therefore, that a competent number of Jews should be converted to Christianity, who might publish it to the rest of

the world with all the evidence that was proper to be offered. But if, on account of the former revelation made to the Jews, it was absolutely fit that the new revelation should be preached by them to the rest of the world, it was necessary that the gospel, at the first, should be confined to them, because, had it been preached to the Gentiles, that circumstance alone would have made the Jews reject it universally. It is well known how high the prejudices of the apostles ran on this head, even after they had received the gifts of the Spirit, being excessively offended with Peter, one of their number, who, by a vision from heaven, had with difficulty been prevailed upon to preach to the proselyte Cornelius. Nay, they were hardly brought to believe that God intended to bestow the gospel on the Gentiles, when they saw them receive the greatest of its privileges in an equal degree with themselves, even the gifts of the Spirit. And though after this they preached to the Gentiles, yet wherever they came, their custom was to begin at the Jews; and on the Jews rejecting the gospel, they turned to the Gentiles, Acts xiii. 46. Thus, as the apostle Paul tells us, Rom. xv. 8. *Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision; he preached only to the Jews; for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, he preached to the Jews to make the truth of God manifest; it being the most effectual means of confirming the promises made to Abraham and the rest of the fathers; namely, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. It was likewise the most effectual means of blessing even the Gentiles themselves. Accordingly, the apostle adds as the fruit of this appointment, and that the Gentiles might glorify God on account of his mercy: the mercy of the new covenant which they enjoy by their conversion to Christianity. The truth is, had Jesus Christ been a minister of the uncircumcision, that is, had he preached the gospel at all to the Gentiles, the Jews would have rejected it; so that the proselytes, and such as held the faith of the proselytes, which the wiser sort of the Gentiles seem generally to have done, would not have become Christ's disciples with such ease and readiness. The reason was, the evidence of the gospel being greatly weakened by the unbelief of the Jews, the converts among the Gentiles would have been few in comparison; and by that means the promises made to the fathers, that in Christ all nations should be blessed, would not have been confirmed, or so fully accomplished, as it is by the scheme which Providence has actually chosen."*

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD DISPLAYED

ON THE FACULTY OF MEMORY.

MEMORY implies a conception and belief of past duration : for it is impossible that a man should remember a thing distinctly, without believing some interval of duration more or less, to have passed between the time it happened, and the present moment ; and I think it is impossible to shew how we could acquire a notion of duration if we had no memory.

Things remembered must be things formerly perceived or known. I remember the transit of Venus over the sun in the year 1769. I must therefore have perceived it at the time it happened, otherwise I could not remember it. Our first acquaintance with any object of thought cannot be by remembrance. Memory can only produce a continuance or renewal of a former acquaintance with the thing remembered.

The remembrance of a past event is necessarily accompanied with a conviction of our own existence at the time the event happened. I cannot remember a thing that happened a year ago, without a conviction as strong as memory can give, that I, the same identical person, who now remember that event, did then exist.

I think it appears that memory is an original faculty given us by the Author of our being, of which we can give no account, but that we are so made.

The knowledge which I have of things past by my memory, seems to me as unaccountable, as an immediate knowledge would be of things to come ; and I can give no reason why I should have the one and not the other, but that such is the will of my Maker. I find in my mind a distinct conception and a firm belief of a series of past events ; but how this is produced I know not. I call it memory, but this is only giving a name to it, it is not an account of its cause. I believe most firmly what I distinctly remember ; but I can give no reason of this belief. It is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives me this understanding.

When I believe the truth of a mathematical axiom, or of a mathematical proposition, I see that it must be so : every man that has the same conception of it sees the same. There is a necessary and an evident connection between the subject and the predicate of the proposition ; and I have all the evidence to support my belief, which I can possibly conceive.

When I believe that I washed my hands and face this morning, there appears no necessity in the truth of this proposition. It might be, or it might not be. A man may distinctly conceive it without believing it at all. How then do I come to believe it? I remember it distinctly. This is all I can say. This remembrance is an act of my mind. Is it impossible that this act should be, if the event had not happened? I confess I do not see any necessary connection between the one and the other. If any one can show such a connection, then I think that belief which we have of what we remember, will be fairly accounted for; but if this cannot be done, that belief is unaccountable, and we can say no more, but that it is the result of our constitution.

Perhaps it may be said, that the experience we have had of the fidelity of memory is a good reason for relying upon its testimony. I deny not that this may be a reason to those who have had this experience, and who reflect upon it. But I believe there are few who ever thought of this reason, or who found any need of it. It must be some very rare occasion that leads a man to have recourse to it; and in those who have done so, the testimony of memory was believed in before the experience of its fidelity, and that belief could not be caused by the experience which came after it.

We know some abstract truths, by comparing the terms of the proposition which expresses them, and perceiving some necessary relation or agreement between them. It is thus I know that three and two make five; that the diameters of a circle are all equal. But I apprehend that our knowledge of the existence of things contingent can never be traced to this source. I know that such a thing exists, or did exist. This knowledge cannot be derived from the perception of a necessary agreement between the existence and the thing that exists, because there is no such necessary agreement; and therefore no such agreement can be perceived either immediately, or by a chain of reasoning. The thing does not exist necessarily, but by the will and power of him that made it; and there is no contradiction follows from supposing it not to exist.

Whence I think it follows, that our knowledge of the existence of our own thoughts, of the existence of all the material objects about us, and of all past contingencies, must be derived, not from a perception of necessary relations or agreements, but from some other source.

Our Maker has provided other means for giving us the knowledge of these things ; means which perfectly answer their end, and produce the effect intended by them. But in what manner they do this, is, I fear, beyond our power to explain. We know our own thoughts, and the operations of our minds, by a power which we call consciousness : but this is only giving a name to this part of our frame. It does not explain its fabric, nor how it produces in us an irresistible conviction of its informations. We perceive material objects, and their sensible qualities, by our senses ; but how they give us this information, and how they produce our belief in it, we know not. We know many past events by memory ; but how it gives us this information, I believe is inexplicable.

It is well known that subtile disputes were held through all the scholastic ages, and are still carried on, about the prescience of the Deity. Aristotle had taught that there can be no certain fore-knowledge of things contingent : and in this he has been very generally followed, upon no other grounds, as I apprehend, but that we cannot conceive how such things should be fore-known, and therefore conclude it to be impossible. Hence has arisen an opposition and supposed inconsistency between divine prescience, and human liberty. Some have given up the first in favour of the last, and others have given up the last in favour of the first.

It is remarkable, that these disputants have never apprehended that there is any difficulty in reconciling with liberty the knowledge of what is past, but only of what is future. It is prescience only, and not memory, that is supposed to be hostile to liberty, and hardly reconcileable to it.

Yet I believe the difficulty is perfectly equal in the one case and the other. I admit, that we cannot account for prescience of the actions of a free agent. But I maintain that we can as little account for memory of the past actions of a free agent. If any man thinks he can prove that the actions of a free agent cannot be foreknown, he will find the same arguments of equal force to prove that the past actions of a free agent cannot be remembered. It is true, that what is past did certainly exist. It is no less true, that what is future will certainly exist. I know no reasoning from the constitution of the agent, or from his circumstances, that has not equal strength, whether it be applied to his past or to his future actions. The past was, but now is not.

The future will be, but now is not. The present is equally connected, or unconnected with both.

The only reason why men have apprehended so great disparity in cases so perfectly like, I take to be this, that the faculty of memory in ourselves convinces us from fact, that it is not impossible, that an intelligent being, even a finite being, should have certain knowledge of past actions of free agents, without tracing them from any thing necessarily connected with them. But having no prescience in ourselves corresponding to our memory of what is past, we find great difficulty in admitting it to be possible even to the Supreme Being.

A faculty which we possess in some degree, we easily admit that the Supreme Being may possess in a more perfect degree; but a faculty which has nothing corresponding to it in our constitution, we will hardly allow to be possible. We are so constituted as to have intuitive knowledge of many things past; but we have no intuitive knowledge of the future. We might perhaps have been so constituted as to have an intuitive knowledge of the future, but not of the past: nor would this constitution have been more unaccountable than the present, though it might be much more inconvenient. Had this been our constitution, we should have found no difficulty in admitting that the Deity may know all things future, but very much in admitting his knowledge of things that are past.

Our original faculties are unaccountable. Of these memory is one. He only who made them comprehends fully how they are made, and how they produce in us, not only a conception, but a firm belief and assurance of things which it concerns us to know.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SOCINIANISM EXPOSED.

(Concluded from our last.)

OF GOD. 'In illustrating the nature and perfections of the Deity, they (the Socinians) make not the least mention of his *infinity*, his *omniscience*, his *immensity*, his *eternity*, his *omnipotence*, his *omnipresence*, his *spirituality*, nor of those other perfections of the divine nature that surpass the comprehension of finite minds. Instead of this, they characterize the Supreme

Being only by his *wisdom*, his *immortality*, his *goodness*, and unbounded *dominion* and empire over the creatures. By this it would seem, that even in the early period of Socinianism, the rulers of that sect had adopted it as a maxim, that nothing *incomprehensible* or *mysterious* was to be admitted into their religious system.”*

Jesus Christ. ‘He was a person sent into the world to promulgate the will of God : to communicate new lights on the subject of religious duties : by his life to set an example of perfect obedience : by his death to manifest his sincerity : and by his resurrection to convince us of the great truth which he had been commissioned to teach, our rising again to future life.’—Magee, p. 23. ‘But the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus, was probably the fiction of some early gentile convert, who hoped by elevating the dignity of the founder, to abate the popular prejudice against the sect.’† And Dr. Priestly, who may be considered as refining on the principles of Socinus, says, ‘Christ being a man, who suffered and died in the best of causes, there is nothing so very different in the occasion and manner of his death from that of others who suffered and died after him in the same cause of Christianity, but that *their sufferings and death may be considered in the same light with his.*’ Magee. p. 95.

Here, reader, pause, and ask your heart in the name, of God, are you willing to subscribe to the above sentiments respecting Jesus Christ. Are you perfectly satisfied to rest your eternal salvation upon doctrines that set aside the merits of his death? Are you willing to allow that the death of Christ was nothing more than a confirmation of his preaching ; nothing more than a pattern of a holy and patient, and perhaps voluntary martyrdom ; nothing more than necessarily antecedent to his resurrection, by which he gave a grand and clear proof of human resurrection? Or, rather, do you not think, that the death of Jesus Christ is spoken of in scripture, in reference to human salvation, in terms and in a manner in which the death of no person whatever is spoken of besides. Others have died martyrs, as well as our Lord. Others have suffered in a righteous cause as well as he ; but that is said of him, and of his death and sufferings, which is not said of any one else ; an efficacy and a concern are ascribed

* Mosheim. vol. iv. p. 489.

† Soc. New Test. p. 2.

to them in the business of human salvation, which are not ascribed to any other.*

The Holy Ghost. 'With respect to the Holy Ghost,' says Dr. Mosheim,† 'they (the Socinians,) plainly deny his being a *divine person*, and represent him as nothing more, than a divine quality or virtue, as appears from the following passage: '*The Holy Ghost is the energy or perfection of God, whose fullness God the Father bestowed upon his only begotten Son, our Lord, that we, becoming his adopted children might receive of his fullness.*' While the modern Socinians declare, 'that the scriptures do not teach the existence of any such person as the Holy Spirit, and that there is no ground for the expectation of any supernatural operation on the mind.'‡

'The Apostle does not mean to teach that the Spirit of God is a real person, a distinct intelligent agent.'§

The Scriptures. 'The Socinians plead for the use of reason in interpreting Scripture,—but apply it to the *doctrines* of revelation, as well as to the *evidences* of the truth of it. Accordingly they reject what is spoken if they cannot comprehend it.'||

Dr. Priestly, in his letters to Dr. Horsley, says, 'I have frequently avowed myself not to be a believer in the inspiration of the Evangelists and Apostles, as writers: I therefore hold the miraculous conception to be one, with respect to which any person is fully at liberty to think as the evidence shall appear to him.' And consistently with this profession he does not scruple to say in his *History of Corrup.* vol. ii. p. 370.—'The apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively, and therefore, wrote as any other person of his turn of mind and thinking, and in his situation, would have written without any particular inspiration.'¶

Dr. Magee asserts (p. 106,) 'that in every instance the doctrine of scripture is tried by their abstract notion of right, and rejected if not accordant; and quotes one as charging the sacred writers as bunglers, producing 'lame accounts, improper quotations, and inconclusive reasonings.' Another writer of this class, as declaring, 'that the narrations in the New Testament, true or false, are only suited for ignorant, uncultivated minds, who cannot enter into the evidence of natural religion:' another, as remarking on the words of St. Peter, *that prophecy came*

* Paley's Works, vol. iv. p. 257. † Vol. 4. p. 490. ‡ Magee p. 464.—
Priestly's Sermons pas. § New Test. note on 1 Cor. ch. xii. verse 10, 11.
¶ Claud's Essay, vol. i. p. 153. ¶ Fletcher's Letters to Priestly, p. 37.

not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, that 'Peter speaks here according to the conception of the Jews,' and that 'the prophets may have delivered the offspring of their own brains as divine revelations;' and lastly, that another glories in having given 'a little light to St. Paul's darkness, a darkness, as some think, industriously affected.'

The Soul. Dr. Priestly stands at the head of those bold philosophers, who deny the immortality and immateriality of the soul of man;† while others of them maintain the sleep of the soul, which they say, becomes insensible at death, and is raised again with the body at the resurrection.‡ 'The apostle, (Phil. ch. i. v. 21.) could not mean to express an expectation of an intermediate state of enjoyment between death and the resurrection: for he hints at no such topic of consolation to the bereaved Thessalonians in the passage above cited, viz. 1 Thess. ch. iv. ver. 13—18.'

Holy Angels. The authors of the Socinian Testament do not seem to allow, 'the real external existence of such beings as Angels:' see the note on Rev. ch. iv. ver. 2. compared with the note on Acts, ch. vii. ver. 53; the latter passage they consider *may* mean 'with great pomp and splendor on the mount. Thunder, lightning, and tempest may be called angels, like the plague of Egypt.' New Test.

The Devil. These gentlemen who have commented so *ingeniously* on their version of the New Testament, utterly deny that the Scriptures give any countenance to the doctrine maintained by St. Peter in the 2nd chap. and 4th verse of his second epistle, and like some of their brethren who have 'given a little light to St. Paul's darkness,' have also undertaken to set St. Peter right. 'The messengers,' say they in their note on the above text, 'are the spies who were sent to explore the land of Canaan!!' And 'the messengers who watched not duly over their principality, but deserted their proper habitation, he kept with perpetual chains under darkness, (punished them with judicial blindness of mind,) unto the judgment of a great day, i. e. when they were destroyed by a plague. Jude, ver. 5.'

What says common sense to this kind of legerdemain, that can get rid of the devil so easily, and change the whole phalanx

† See Fletcher's Letters to Priestly, p. 23, and Lempriere's Biographical Dictionary, article Priestly. ‡ Buck's Dictionary, article Socinians.

of fallen angels into a few unfaithful spies by a stroke or two of the pen? What, but that it answers their purpose right well, and that those who had the temerity to reject the sacrifice of the cross, when living, should be in no danger of suffering any punishment for so doing, after they were dead. But it may be asked, do they not allow that there is a being called the devil?—‘not a real, but a hypothetical and fictitious being: the principle of evil personified: the supposed cause of evil.’*

Hell Torments. On Matt. ch. xxv. ver. 46. they thus comment; ‘This text so far from giving countenance to the *harsh* doctrine of eternal misery, is rather favourable to the more pleasing and more probable hypothesis, of the ultimate restitution of the wicked to virtue and happiness.’ And on Rev. ch. xiv. ver. 11. they say, ‘It would be very unreasonable to infer the *gloomy* doctrine of eternal misery from this text. But if any one is disposed to lay undue stress upon it, it may be sufficient to remark that it is not here asserted that the *torment* continues, but that the *smoke* of it ascends for ever and ever.’

Rev. ch. xx. ver. 10. ‘This text has also been alledged, but with little reason in favour of what has been justly called the *heart withering* doctrine of eternal torments.’†

General Conflagration. ‘It is not reasonable to believe that an event so little countenanced by natural appearances as that of the destruction of the earth by a general conflagration, is the subject of a divine prediction. It is well known that in the language of prophecy great political changes and revolutions are foretold under the symbol of terrible convulsions in the natural world. It can hardly admit of a doubt that the sublime language of this context is to be interpreted in a similar manner. ‘The heavens and the earth which are now,’ ver. 7. ‘must necessarily signify the Jewish dispensation, or the then moral state of the world, which must pass away to make room for the promulgation of the Christian religion. But this revolution cannot take place without producing great changes and convulsions in the political world; which, in prophetic language, is expressed by the heavens being on fire, the elements melting, and the earth with the works on it being burned up.’‡

* New Test. passim.

† New Test.

‡ New Test. 2 Pet. ch. iii. ver. 12.

ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

THE Methodists, as a body of Christians, are eminently favoured with a rich variety of means, admirably calculated to promote their piety, usefulness, and happiness. Among these, class-meetings occupy a station of primary importance, and have been blessed of God to the edification of thousands and tens of thousands. That ignorant and wicked men should ridicule and deride those persons who love Christian communion, is not at all surprising, when we recollect the declaration of the Apostle, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;" and we know that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Pitiably indeed are those persons, who are unable to endure "the world's dread laugh," and who desert the standard of the cross, dismayed with "a fool-born jest!" To candid, reasonable men, it may be sufficient to say, that meetings for the relation of Christian experience are recommended and approved in the sacred Scriptures: see Ps. lxvi. 16. Mal. iii. 16. Col. iii. 16. Heb. iii. 12, 13. x. 24, 25. These passages sufficiently prove the propriety and importance of the practice; and good men, in every age, have delighted to "take sweet counsel together," in the things of God. In these means, *simplicity, honesty, and propriety* should be *sacredly* observed. The plain, unvarnished tale of a man of God is always interesting; he disdains equivocation, and speaks to the point, to the heart! Every thing fine and laboured in the relation of our experience should be *studiously* avoided: and the *diffident, fearful, humble* follower of Jesus should be informed, that a flowery, far-fetched statement is altogether unnecessary. God loves the sighs of a broken and contrite heart better than all the vain professions of proud formalists: and a sensible, pious leader will not only carefully feed the lambs of his flock, but will carry them in his bosom.—Behold yonder company of Christians waiting upon God! It is one of the most lovely sights upon earth! "*Their's* is converse such as heaven approves;" yea, "the Lord himself is among them." The ignorant are instructed, the weak strengthened, the distressed comforted, the doubting encouraged, the tried supported; and they all rejoice together in the God of their salvation! Peace, unity, and brotherly love are promoted, and Christ glorified in his living members. Is it not lamentable that

meetings so profitable should ever be neglected? Yet, alas, this is too frequently the case. It is grievous to a pious heart to hear some professors attempt to justify themselves, by saying, "The means are not salvation; we can go to heaven without them!" What is this, but saying, in effect, "We are wiser than God!" He has commanded us to seek, to strive, to read, to hear, to pray, to communicate: but we have found out an easier way, one more suitable to our carnal, indolent disposition! But remember, "There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death:" and God will say, with an awful frown, to such childish reasoners, "Ye have gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them." Others are kept from attending the means by a little bodily indisposition, a shower of rain, a dark or cold night, a worthless friend, a needless visit, and a long list of insignificant &c. &c. With such pretexts they may endeavour to pacify a guilty conscience, but the attempt is vain! Are not the following among the *real* causes of their absence? They have departed, at least in *heart*, from God—their love is grown cold—the closet has been neglected—sinful tempers have been indulged—guilt is contracted—and therefore they are embarrassed and distressed when questioned relative to the work of grace in their souls. Influenced by a desire to arrest the progress of so great an evil, I would endeavour to notice a few of the awful consequences which must ever attend the neglect of these invaluable means.

1. What must be the feelings of a pious leader, when his members refuse to meet him? He sees them, perhaps, attend the public means with tolerable regularity; but their shy and cold looks tell him, all is not well with them. He watches for their souls; but, week after week, they give him no opportunity of inquiring, "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there not a cause? Is there no secret thing with thee?" Can he suppose they either love or respect him? Can he believe they are alive to God? Ah, no! evil reasonings vex and distress his soul—his hands hang down—he mourns and weeps in secret over them—and concludes, either they are dissatisfied with him, or, what is worse, are sitting down at ease in Zion.

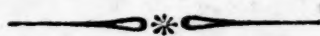
2. It is injurious to the cause of God. They must be considered at best as doubtful characters: "Tossed about with every wind; and unstable as water, they cannot excel." Are not those persons generally most pious, and truly devoted to God,

who are most regular and conscientious in their attendance on these means? If all the leaders in the great Methodist body were asked this question would they not reply in the affirmative? While, we fear, those who habitually neglect them, are often a disgrace to the cause they ought to honour.

3. It is fatal to themselves. Deprived of the advice and society of the brethren, they fall an easy prey to temptation; evil tempers gain the ascendancy over them; they sink under their trials and difficulties; lose their peace of mind: neither heaven nor earth, God nor man, can make them happy: yea, they anticipate the horrors of hell.

Lastly, it must be offensive to God, ungratefully to slight the means he has so greatly blessed, to be trifling, lukewarm, and careless; to give occasion to his enemies to rejoice; to grieve the hearts of the pious; and endanger the salvation of their souls.

My dear reader, art thou the man, the woman? The writer is not your enemy, he wishes to be your friend. Arise! shake thyself from the dust! "Remember Lot's wife!" Trifler, halt! give way to the devil no more! Fly instantly to the Lord Jesus Christ! Bow down before him with holy shame! Low as thou art fallen, guilty and miserable as thou art, there yet is hope. O do not obstinately perish! Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee: lest the Supreme Judge should at last say, "Depart from me, I know ye not."



RELIGIOUS AND MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.



REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN SUFFOLK CIRCUIT.

To the Editors of the Methodist Magazine.

Smithtown, L. I. April 2, 1818.

DEAR BRETHREN,

By the request of brother Jewett, I forward to you the following account of the revival of religion on this circuit; which, if you think it will be acceptable to the friends of Zion, you are at liberty to insert in your Magazine. F. REED.

It was with evident marks of approbation, that the Lord manifested himself at our Camp-Meeting in June last, at Cow-Harbour. Though some dawnings of the late revival had appeared, previous to this, it was here the day began to open with peculiar lustre. A number who attended from the circuit with apparent

carelessness, returned home, either rejoicing in a sin-pardoning God, or groaning under the heavy load of guilt, seeking for deliverance. From such unusual appearances it was evident that the great Head of the Church was preparing the way for a special manifestation of his grace. Our places of worship were much thronged, where the people clearly expressed the anxiety of their minds by the solemnity of their countenances. Conviction gradually gained upon them, till no longer able to suppress their feelings, they were seen flocking to the altar with weeping eyes, entreating us to pray for them.

It was with peculiar emotions of pleasure, that we beheld the pious parent rejoicing over a son or daughter, crying for mercy, or testifying of the goodness of God in their late conversion ;— or perhaps a child praying over a weeping, broken-hearted parent. The joyful tidings of the conversion of souls, while it served to strengthen the confidence and rejoice the hearts of christians, struck with amazement those who hitherto had manifested no concern.

Haupogues was the first place that shared in the gracious visitation. A number who experienced religion at Camp-Meeting, joined society the first opportunity. Meetings were attended almost every evening ; and scarce one was concluded but more or less were made the happy subjects of converting grace.— Dwelling houses were not sufficiently capacious to contain the people who assembled to witness the marvellous displays of the power of God. They seemed to forget or pay but little attention to their ordinary concerns, while the more important business of eternity engrossed their thoughts. The fruits of the revival in this town were principally youths ; though some in a more advanced age have found that God is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto him : among the latter is a man about fifty years of age, once notorious for profaneness ; but now a new man in Christ Jesus.

Under preaching, the word seemed to be as eagerly received as a morsel of meat by a hungry man. Such pleasing appearances could not but encourage us in the labour of the vineyard. Other societies, hearing what God was doing for the people in this place, were quickened in their importunities, that they might be visited with the same blessings.

Westfield was the next that was favoured with the effusions of the Spirit, though it was some time in a doubtful case. The

teeming cloud seemed long to hover over them, till suddenly it poured forth its rich treasure ; and the day so much desired, was now realized. Seven or eight souls were converted in a prayer-meeting one evening, and many returned home under a consciousness of their guilt and absolute need of a Saviour. This was the beginning of good days. Thence followed such scenes as will be indelibly portrayed upon the mind of every one who witnessed them. Frequently after preaching the congregation would remain upon their seats, as if unwilling to leave the consecrated spot—Prayers have generally succeeded, in the time of which, many have been brought to sing redeeming love. Not only were sinners awakened and converted, but christians were built up in the Lord, and backsliders reclaimed from their Laodicean security.

Soon after this, the work began in Patchogue ; a place once notorious for inattention to religion, especially among the youth, who were much given to the vain recreations of life ; and professors in general had become formal and dead. But suddenly the place assumed a different appearance, and the people in general became alarmed. The youth who were once so eager to pursue their vain delights, now saw their frivolity, and deeply bewailed their folly and mis-spent moments. Instead of the nightly revel and unprofitable conversation, companies met together to pray with and for each other, and improve their time with reference to a future state. Conversions were numerous, and many of them clear and convincing. Within the space of a few weeks, upwards of one hundred souls, it was thought, were made the happy subjects of pardoning grace.

In Moriches the work commenced under the preaching of brother M. Some young women were awakened and converted the same evening, and soon after many others became the subjects of the work. Though it was not so general as in many places, it was observed to be very genuine. In a place so long destitute of religious revivals as this, such a work was much needed, and was peculiarly interesting and pleasing to the children of God.

In Islip, Babylon, and Stony-Brook, was a similar work for several weeks, and many were brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Since the commencement of our labours on this circuit, we have added to our societies *one hundred and seventy* members and have had occasion to expel but very few.

Though this part of God's heritage has heretofore been favoured with the out-pouring of the Spirit, this is thought to be the most general and powerful that ever was known by the most aged inhabitants among us.

And, considering the greatness of the work, but very few have manifested much declension. Convictions have generally been deep and pungent, and conversions clear and satisfactory.—Other denominations have, in some places, shared in the gracious visitation. How many have been added to them I know not.

POETRY.

STANZAS, WRITTEN IMPROMPTU, ON FINDING IN MY BROTHER'S WRITING-DESK A SLIP OF PAPER, CONTAINING THE FOLLOWING WORDS,

"Choose God for your portion."

(Inscribed to Oliver W. L. Warren.)

List'ning to pleasure's syren voice, Or bound in passion's witching spell, What numbers make a fearful choice! And sink to hell!	Brother, with zeal thy choice maintain, Tho' earth and hell against thee rise; Thy course pursue, thy joy obtain, And win the prize.
Subdu'd alone by sovereign love, My soul pursues a diff'rent road; Her portion seeks in Heav'n above, And chooses God.	For me, as far from thee I roam, Where wide Ontario's waters roll, The tender thought of Heaven, my home, Shall soothe my soul.
Brother, is this thy happy choice? And hast thou chos'n the better way? Then, let my soul with thine rejoice, And praise and pray.	In twilight's pensive, lonely hour, That sacred hour, so dear to me, In some lone grot, or woodland bow'r I'll pray for thee.
The tear that wets my conscious cheek, The grateful heart's enraptur'd swell, Attests the joy no words can speak, No language tell.	The world is but a weary way, A dreary land, where pilgrims roam, Where exil'd strangers sadly stray, And sigh for home.
I've seen life's varying prospects rise, In fancy's rainbow hues array'd, And like the Iris' transient dyes, Its pleasures fade.	But there's a Heav'n of joy and light, Where weary pilgrims sweetly rest, And soon we'll wing our joyful flight To Jesus' breast.
Vain is the wealth of India's mines, False is the charm that wit bestows, And vain, the holly wreath that twines The Poet's brows.	Oh, we shall meet on that blest shore! Oh we shall join the holy throng, And sing our toils and sufferings o'er, A joyful song!
But he, who makes the Lord his stay, Shall find his bliss forever sure; When earth, and all its hopes decay, Shall stand secure.	CAROLINE MATILDA.